



2. VISION AND VALUES

A. “RESPECTING THE PAST, FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE”

The focus of this planning effort is to strike a balance between the desirable qualities of the past, that are greatly valued by the community, and the needs of the future. This section establishes a vision for the future while also identifying specific qualities about the community that should be preserved. The General Plan recognizes that Cottonwood serves as a central provider for a range of critical services and programs for a larger group of residents of surrounding communities. There is a need to recognize the role that Cottonwood plays as a center for a growing region while also protecting the “traditional small town qualities” that people appreciate.

B. MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

At their January 2013, Strategic Initiatives Council Retreat the City Council confirmed the following Mission Statement and Vision Statement for the City of Cottonwood:

MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Cottonwood, through ethical, accountable, professional leadership and collaboration, enhances quality of life for our diverse community while preserving our unique environment and character.

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Cottonwood strives to maintain a uniquely desirable and sustainable community.

We are unique because of our people, our grand natural resources, public amenities, leadership, diversity and home town atmosphere.

We will continue to conserve, preserve and manage our precious resources, including the Verde River and its unique riparian habitat.

We will enhance our position as the economic center for the Verde Valley, providing support for entrepreneurialism and retail, medical, education, transportation, recreation and tourism opportunities.

The City of Cottonwood provides leadership and solutions to ensure a prosperous community where a diversity of people and nature thrive.



C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles identify a set of broad themes that help to frame the values and vision of the community. These concepts provide a framework for advancing the interests of the General Plan in terms of physical, comprehensive and long-range planning. These principles provide a starting point for the expression of a positive vision for the future of the community:

Leadership Role.

As the leading service provider and commercial center of the area, Cottonwood not only has a responsibility to recognize the needs and interests of its own population but also of the surrounding community, which interacts with Cottonwood on a daily basis.

Partnerships and Cooperation.

We recognize the importance of working collaboratively with all public and private partners to realize our shared goals of ensuring we have a healthy, safe and prosperous community that provides great opportunities for all people to seek and achieve their goals in life.

Civility in Talk and Action.

We respect diversity of opinion as part of a healthy democracy. The ability to foster effective dialogue through the public process depends on civility in both talk and action. These values are key to being able to effectively work together for common good.

Sustainability and Stewardship.

The goal of balancing our human needs with long-term environmental well-being provides a foundation for the community vision. Natural, cultural and economic systems are woven together to support and inform appropriate decisions to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region.

Small Town Character.

Although people may have a range of impressions regarding the meaning of “small town character,” protecting and preserving the traditional qualities of the community is seen by many as an important guiding principle for Cottonwood. With a growing modern community, this concept is one that needs to be considered in terms of the quality of life that people desire.

Support for Neighborhood Values.

Stable, healthy, multi-generational neighborhoods provide the foundation and central framework for a great city. We commit to maintaining and enhancing neighborhood values through appropriate decisions that affect these goals.

Quality Transportation System.

Cottonwood supports ongoing efforts to maintain and improve the existing circulation system to the best possible standards. Multi-modal transportation objectives, including walking, bicycling and transit, shall also be recognized as valued parts of a comprehensive transportation system.

Support Healthy Natural Environment.

People greatly value the natural environment and open space around Cottonwood. Protection of the Verde River Greenway corridor is of the highest priority. Protect and improve water resources. Support Cottonwood city parks and recreation programs.

Honor and Respect Heritage and Culture.

Support preservation of historic resources and support programs to increase awareness of the benefits of historic preservation and the long and deep history of the region.



D. COMMUNITY VISION PROGRAM

A series of well-attended, public “visioning” workshops and open house format meetings were held in October and November 2012. Participants were asked to provide their ideas and comments about current conditions and future visions for Cottonwood. Break out groups were given the opportunity to identify Treasures, Challenges and Visions for the community.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

October 3, 2012: Visioning Workshop
Post-it note and vision statement exercises

October 18, 2012: “Coffee Talk” with the Mayor
Post-it note exercise

October 23, 2012: Parks & Recreation Commission
Post-it note exercise

November 7th & 8th, 2012: Open Houses
Open agenda; opportunity to review and add comments



FALL 2012 – VISIONING PROCESS RESULTS - KEY TOPICS

The following section summarizes comments received through the public visioning process in 2012:

1) Community and Quality of Life.

One of the most common themes heard during all of the events was the way the community treasured the small-town feeling of Cottonwood. Elements that help influence this small-town feel include the personable residents, low crime rate which creates a feeling of safety, and the opportunities for community involvement and for their input to be received and heard.

2) Education and Economy.

Economic growth and stability were some of the biggest challenges discussed amongst the participants. Residents are looking for higher paying jobs, a key industry base, ways to attract knowledge based jobs and methods to ensure Cottonwood improves its status as the economic hub in the Verde Valley. Ideas for improving the economy included the development of new retail shopping centers and malls to keep people from traveling out of town to shop, developing more tourism opportunities including “cultural tourism,” and helping to support and expand local educational institutions.

3) Recreation.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the primary treasure of the Verde Valley, in terms of recreation, is the Verde River. Residents envision new access trail systems to the river as well as the expansion of other recreational opportunities including parks with facilities for both the young and elderly. Beautiful climate and weather conditions permit year round recreational opportunities in Cottonwood and area residents want to see these opportunities expanded.



4) Environment and Water.

The topic of water and the environment was discussed largely as a challenge. Concerns include having adequate water resources to support growth as well as keeping the water quality high. Additionally, maintaining a clean environment with abundant natural resources and open space is a primary concern. Participants envision a clean environment with a healthy watershed that allows us to grow smart, without compromising our future supply.

5) Transportation and Connectivity.

Visioning participants made note that Cottonwood was a key transportation hub for the Verde Valley and they expect this to continue to expand. Primary concerns included access for the elderly, increasing connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians, and alleviating traffic congestion in key areas of town. More mass transportation opportunities, improved streets and extensive trail systems were all pieces of the vision residents have for the City.

6) Old Town.

Old Town is viewed by the community as a treasure and the “jewel” of our City that we should continue to support and promote as a tourist attraction. Residents requested there be more accessible parking spaces available in convenient locations for persons with disabilities.

7) Planning and Development.

A variety of responses were heard in relation to this topic, including keeping Cottonwood a “small town” and growing smartly through adequate long-range planning. Participants listed keeping up with technology, creating affordable housing, and avoiding sprawl as challenges we need to overcome. Visions for the future development of Cottonwood should ensure the economy, environment and community all remain sustainable, healthy and vital for future generations.

8) Human Services.

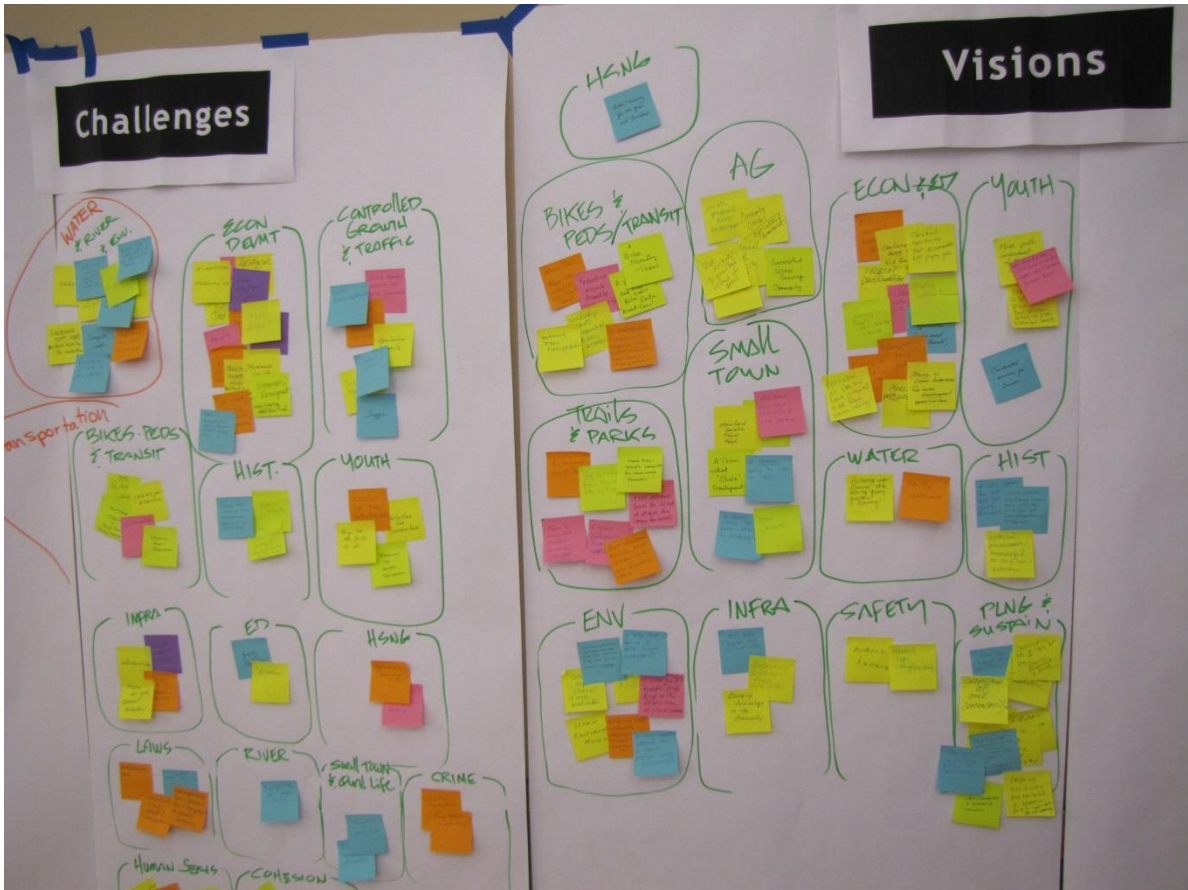
Medical services and facilities were believed to be an important treasure for Cottonwood. Although participants felt the services are currently excellent, they would like to see them continue to expand. Accessibility for seniors was a primary concern, as well as the need to improve youth services. Another challenge for the community is homelessness. Residents envision a community with opportunities for all ages and services that help provide equal access to all.

9) History.

Preserving the National Register historic designation was a topic that was supported during the visioning exercises. Maintaining the historic integrity and uniqueness of place was listed as both a challenge and a vision for the City. Residents treasure the historic homes, Civic Center and Old Town area, as well as nearby Native American ruins and historical features.

10) Safety and Crime/Drug Prevention.

The participants valued the generally low crime rate in Cottonwood and want to see rates even lower. Some challenges the City faces are related to drug control and prevention, as well as homelessness and income issues. Quality jobs, strong educational support, recreation activities for all ages and support services are also needed. These challenges should be addressed to continue promoting public safety.





E. VISION FOUNDATION

The Vision Foundation provides a starting point and base for consideration of the future direction for Cottonwood. For Cottonwood, the goal of maintaining its small town character is balanced with an emerging recognition of its role as a central provider for a growing sub-region and the essential importance of the relationship with the natural environment. These perspectives provide a foundation or base for developing a comprehensive community vision.

I. REGIONAL CENTER.

Since its founding, Cottonwood has served as an important market hub, commercial center, and administrative and activity center for the region. As the area has grown, this interaction has become even more apparent. Although the 2010 U.S. Census indicated Cottonwood's population at 11,265, a detailed review of Census Tract and Block Group data for Cottonwood and the surrounding area, including Verde Village, Clarkdale, Jerome, Cornville and Bridgeport, shows a combined total of over 32,000 residents. As the population of the region has grown over the years, these communities have also become more interconnected physically, economically and socially.

Each of the surrounding communities has their own distinct identity, history, traditions and sense of purpose for their own future self-determination. Cottonwood recognizes and respects the uniqueness of each community. However, the interconnection of jobs, housing, commerce, educational institutions, medical services, governmental administration, religious institutions, recreation, and entertainment opportunities is unmistakable. The daily interaction of families, friends, business associates, clients and people of all backgrounds is intricate and enduring. Ultimately, these communities share the same water resources, air quality, natural resources, physical infrastructure, transportation networks, cultural institutions and responsibilities to each other. Questions about how Cottonwood plans for its growth are considered in terms of the inter-relationship of these communities, as well as critical internal needs.

◆ Commercial Center

Cottonwood has had a key role as the commercial and trade center of the Verde Valley since its founding. With farming and ranching activities located nearby along the Verde River, it was natural that Cottonwood became the supply and trade center for locally produced agricultural goods. The relationship to mining activities in the region was also important to Cottonwood's early development. Entrepreneurs and people of diverse backgrounds were drawn to Cottonwood as the alternative to the strict regulations they found in the company dominated locations in Clarkdale and Clemenceau. As the region grew, Cottonwood continued to expand as the commercial center for trade goods, vehicle sales and service, building materials, and general merchandise of all kinds. Cottonwood also became the center for various professional services, such as banking, real estate, law, engineering and technical services.

Over the years, the variety and scale of commercial activity in the surrounding communities has also increased. With continued population growth around the region it can be expected that those communities will also see expanded commercial growth. In order to remain competitive, Cottonwood will need to stay up to date with evolving trends in business and provide innovative opportunities to attract and retain quality businesses.

◆ Cottonwood Municipal Airport

The Cottonwood Airport Master Plan identifies opportunities for the airport facility and surrounding uses to be further developed as an important economic, commercial, recreational and job development center. Aviation-related uses, as well as other supporting business and employment uses could be further developed in the Airport industrial area.



◆ **Medical Center**

Medical services and resources have been centered in Cottonwood since the earliest days. An outpatient clinic opened in 1939 with donations from the family of Marcus J. Lawrence. In 1945, the 24-bed Marcus J. Lawrence Memorial Hospital opened on Main Street in the downtown area. By 1965, the facility moved to its present location with its new name, the Verde Valley Medical Center. The Medical Center has grown to become the primary regional medical facility for the Verde Valley. The hospital is also the largest private employer in the city. A range of medical support businesses, doctor's offices, laboratories and similar businesses have also developed in proximity to the medical center. In order to properly support future uses and expansion associated with the medical center, careful attention needs to be directed towards any proposed development in the Medical Center area. High standards for project design should be maintained for future development in the nearby area so as to build on the existing theme and provide an attractive location for additional health care-related development.

◆ **Government Center**

The City of Cottonwood facilities include the Public Safety Building with the Police and Fire departments, Cottonwood Library, Municipal Airport, Recreation Center, various City parks and the Municipal Court facility. Cottonwood is also home to a number of County, State and Federal facilities. Yavapai County has their Verde Annex facility located in central Cottonwood with offices for Development Services, Recorder, Assessor, Flood Control and others. In 2012, Yavapai County Community Health Services opened a new Community Health Center in Cottonwood providing a range of services for eligible patients. The State of Arizona has offices for the Department of Economic Security providing client services and administration. ADOT operates their regional Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office here as well. A new Veterans Administration (VA) facility located on Willard Street opened in 2012, to provide outpatient services that previously required traveling to Prescott. The Mingus Union School District and Cottonwood Oak Creek School District have their offices in Cottonwood.

◆ **Recreation Facilities and Entertainment Venues**

Cottonwood welcomes residents of all the surrounding communities to use and enjoy City parks and recreation facilities and programs. The Cottonwood Recreation Center, Riverfront Park, the Farmers Market summer program and the many civic events held throughout the year include participants from all over the region. Additionally, Cottonwood has a wide range of restaurants, theaters and nightlife activities for people's enjoyment. Many civic groups and community organizations are based in Cottonwood and they provide opportunities for involvement by people from all over the region. There is a variety of high quality recreational and social opportunities available in Cottonwood.

2. TRADITIONAL SMALL TOWN QUALITIES.

Cottonwood residents greatly value the benefits of living in a community with traditional character and qualities. With population growth, modernization and technological changes happening throughout society at an ever increasing pace, it becomes that much more valuable to recognize the components that define those positive community aspects and take appropriate action to protect those "traditional small town qualities" that people desire. The idea of a small town is less about the size of the community and more about quality of life, pace and scale, community feeling, neighborhoods and connections.

The following outline is presented as a means to define, discuss and consider those specific feelings and qualities about the community that residents desire when talking about "traditional small town character and qualities."



◆ **Basic Qualities:**

- a. **A Sense of Place and Identity.** Well defined neighborhoods like Old Town; Clemenceau; Verde Heights; Cottonwood Ranch, Sawmill Estates; Verde Village Unit 8; Main & Mingus; Mingus Park and many more.
- b. **Feeling of Community Safety and Friendliness.** Neighborhoods, civic areas and places that allow people a chance to casually interact with others. Human interaction encourages involvement in the community. Involved people are connected to the greater community and provide a base of volunteerism.

◆ **Physical Components:**

- a. **Focused Development.** A physical layout which provides for an enhanced sense of place and community identity.
- b. **Human Scale and Walk-ability.** Pedestrian and bicycle oriented development which places neighborhoods within walking distance of recreation, parks, open space, jobs and convenience oriented services.
- c. **Neighborhood Streets.** Street development which results in safer and more efficient traffic control through the use of design techniques, such as traffic calming, used to slow and better manage traffic through neighborhoods.
- d. **The quality of the Public Realm, Parks, Neighborhoods and Streetscapes.** Desirable neighborhood aesthetics and streetscapes encourage greater community pride, increased property investment and more chances for neighborhood interaction.
- e. **Diversity of Housing.** Support a mix of housing types to meet all needs. Encourage front porches, common front yard build-to lines, windows and entries as a means to place “eyes on the street,” enhancing interaction and deterring crime.
- f. **Healthy Natural Environment.** The community’s natural backdrop provides sense of place as well as opportunities for outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles.

◆ **Social Components:**

- a. **Facilities and Organizations.** Facilities such as parks, schools, churches, libraries and recreation help connect individuals and families to the larger community. Youth sports leagues like soccer, Little League and the swim team also help people and families connect.
- b. **Community Events.** Community events provide opportunities for recreation, entertainment and social interaction. There are many popular events throughout the year in Cottonwood, including the summertime Farmers Market series; Old Town Chocolate Walk, the Christmas parade; Walking on Main; Fourth of July Community Event and Fireworks Extravaganza; Old Town Fall Harvest event; Rhythm and Ribs Event; and the Verde Valley Fair.
- c. **Housing Availability and Affordability.** Housing opportunities need to meet the needs of a diverse population, including low income, seniors, persons with disabilities and special needs housing, as well as working families and retired residents.
- d. **Neighborhood Associations.** Groups such as Block Watch, Block Parties and Take Back the Night events encourage interaction and deter crime.
- e. **Open City Government.** Helpful government services and assistance that are easily accessed. Open meetings and effective communication methods are essential.



f. Positive Involved Community.

We flourish as a community by caring about everyone's needs, by supporting efforts to allow everyone to reach their full potential, by fostering healthy and resilient individuals, and by valuing our community's unique lifestyle and character.

3. NATURAL SETTING.

The landscape context is described by the natural features, mountains and river, plants and animals that surround the city. The context can also be discussed in terms of the quality of the relationship we all have with the place. With growth and development it is critical that related decisions are sensitive to the value of maintaining the natural setting in a healthy, sustainable manner.

The Verde River, its major tributaries and side washes, the Black Hills range, Mingus Mountain, the chaparral covered foothills, many local open space areas and the distant red rocks all define a key aspect of living in this place. Recognition of the importance of the natural setting is a key part of the foundation for the vision for Cottonwood.

The outcome of this perspective is found in policies related to water issues, watershed values, wildlife preservation, landscape conservation, open space preservation and related growth and development decisions. The landscape context is inseparable from the social, cultural and economic well-being of the community.

♦ **Verde River**

Preservation of the Verde River and the Greenway riparian corridor is a central component of the community vision. The Verde River, its named tributaries and the numerous unnamed side washes and drainages are all considered as part of the structure of the river system. The health and well-being of the river system includes the inter-related ecosystems that connect from the top of the nearby mountains to the riparian (river) corridor.

♦ **Open Space**

Preservation of natural open space networks at the local to the regional level provides a context for development that adds value to the entire community. Interconnected open space systems need to be considered in terms of various scales, including individual properties, neighborhoods, city-wide and regional.

♦ **Viewsheds**

The views of the surrounding mountains, the wide open vistas and various local features are all valued resources that define the community. The quality of the natural context can add to the measurable economic value of a property. All types of development from private buildings to roads to public facilities need to be carefully considered to preserve and enhance the positive views of the natural landscape. Certain features, such as Mingus Mountain or the Red Rocks, have significance for the entire region. The scenic view is defined as what you see from a particular place or property. An analysis of the viewshed qualities or scenic views should be expected for key properties as part of the development process. The criteria may include consideration of slopes and hillsides, ridgelines, open vistas, grading standards, building orientation, effects on positive or negative values, and cumulative effects of development on the scenic vistas.